from the appearance of the Syenite quarries, regarding the progress of discolouration and disintegration, it is necessary to determine the time when they were worked. I do not know that there is any direct historic evidence on the subject; from a number of considerations however, it would appear to be pretty certain, that the quarries of Syene have hardly been in use since the early dynasties of the Pharaohs. The purposes to which the Syenite granite was chiefly applied, were the forming of colossi and obelisks, and the lining and casing of pyramids and some of the propylæa of the temples. Now all the colossi that are known are of very ancient date. The principal ones bear the names of Amenoph. III., corresponding to 1430 B.C., and Rameses II., to 1350 B.C. The greatest number of the obelisks known, are works of the Pharaohs of the Rameses dynasty, from 1400 to 1300 B.C. The obelisk at Heliopolis, is inscribed with the name of Osirtasen I., who lived about 1900 B.C. There are one or two obelisks which are exceptions in regard to their antiquity, if we may judge by their less perfect style of workmanship and the absence of any ancient name; but these, in all probability, are old Egyptian monuments, which have been dressed over again and reinscribed in Greek or Latin for some special purpose. None of these spurious-looking obelisks exist in Egypt—that which stands in the Atmeidan at Constantinople, and one or two at Rome, as for instance that near San Giovanni in Laterano, are of this description. The great pyramids which were cased externally with granite, as well as lined throughout the passages with the same material, are of the time of Suphis—fully 2000 years B.C.—and the immediate successors of that monarch. The only two temples in which I remember to have seen granite propylæa, are one at Karnac by Osirei I. 1335 B.C., and that of Medinet Habon, by Rameses III., about 1380 B.C.

Besides these facts in favour of the supposition that the quarries of Syene were wrought principally in the Pharaonic ages, we have negative proof in support of this view, in the fact that no granite was used in the construction of the temples raised under the Greeks and Romans, and no colossi or original-looking obelisks have been discovered of Ptolomaic or later date. In further support of this opinion we find the names of early Pharaohs cut on the rocks in the neighbourhood of the quarries; as those of Thothmes III., 1495 B.C., and Psamatik I., 664 B.C. Indeed, it stands to reason that the greatest works of a people should be constructed during the period of their greatest power and prosperity, which undoubtedly was that of the Rameses dynasty.

From these considerations, then, it would appear that the quarries of Syene were wrought chiefly, if not exclusively, in the days of the Pharaohs, and, consequently, that the surfaces that were formed in the process of quarrying, and which we have an opportunity of examining at the present day, are of very ancient date.

It is easy to distinguish, by the marks of the tools, the surfaces of the rocks which have been exposed by the operation of quarrying; but they are, moreover, very readily recognised by the marked difference of colours which they present, when compared with the surfaces which have remained untouched. The latter, far from shewing any of the pink colour characteristic of Syenite, are covered with a dark brown crust of decomposing crystals, in some instances so loose as to be easily removed by a slight blow of a hammer. The quarried surfaces, on the contrary, are fresh, clean, and compact, and retain the vivid pink of the felspar intact. In these respects they agree with the chips, which we must suppose to have been formed at the same time. So very fresh is the colour of some of these surfaces, that it is only on comparing them with a newly-broken specimen that their somewhat darker hue is distinctly visible. There is hardly any difference of colour among the quarried surfaces.

We have thus shewn that the quarried surfaces must be about 3000 years old at least, and that during that great space of time they have hardly at all been affected by the action of the atmosphere, while the natural surfaces have been greatly acted upon. The obvious deduction from these facts is, that an immense series of ages must have passed away since the rocks of Syene were brought into the position which they now occupy. It is quite impossible to say what length of time has elapsed; estimating it by the very slow progress of the discolouration, it might be 10,000 years or it might be 100,000. But even these are moderate numbers, compared with what we should be obliged to give, were we to bring into comparison with the surfaces of the quarries the decomposed granite which covers the ground far and near to a great depth, and which must all have originally formed part of the solid rock. When a surface exposed for 3,000 years has not in the very least given way to the influence of the atmosphere, what an inconceivably vast period of exposure was necessary to wear away many feet of solid granite, and especially as that formation, as it occurs in Egypt, is one of the most durable of compound rocks, from its containing so small a quantity of alkaline matter and protoxide of iron.

The above remarks receive a striking corroboration from some facts regarding the discolouration of the rocks in the bed of the Nile at Philæ, and the immediate neighbourhood of the cataracts of E'Souan.

THE BUILDERS' SOCIETY AND THE REFEREES.

Sir,—I take leave to forward to you the following copies of correspondence between the Committee of the Builders' Society and the official Referees and Registrar, and to request that you will give them early insertion.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

Thomas Piper, Jun.

At a meeting of the committee of the Builders' Society, held at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen-street, on Monday, the 28th ult., it was resolved,—

"That in pursuance of the suggestion contained in the letter of Mr. Symonds, of the 17th ult., copies of the correspondence between this committee and the official referees and registrar be sent to the editor of The Builder, with a request that he would insert them as early as convenient."

17a, Bishopsgate-street Without, 2nd June, 1847.

Dear Sir,—I am desired to forward for your information and that of the official referees, copies of the report of the Builders' Society upon the bill now before Parliament for amending the Buildings Act, and to say that a copy has been sent to Lord Morpeth, and an interview asked with him on the subject.—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

Thomas Piper, Jun., Hon. Sec.

A. Symonds, Esq.

Office of Metropolitan Buildings,
6, Adelphi-terrace, Strand, June 4th, 1847.

Sir,—With reference to the report of the committee of the Builders' Society upon the bill for amending the Metropolitan Buildings Act, which was transmitted by you yesterday, I beg on the part of the official referees and myself to return our acknowledgments, and at the same time to observe that some of the views stated in that report are founded upon misapprehensions, which it appears to us might have been obviated by some previous communication with this office.

I may mention one instance in the observations on the clauses 4 and 5, in which it is stated that "it would be desirable that all decisions should be registered, indexed, and be accessible, as some public documents already are, to the public upon payment of a nominal fee." This is already done to an extent, I believe, not attained in any other office, and the fee of sixpence per volume may be deemed nominal, since all the awards on the same subject are included in the same volume, so that without any labour or research, whatever has taken place upon the same subject may be at once seen.*

It is to be regretted, however, that the public have scarcely availed themselves of the facilities of this office, and with a view to extend them, and literally to bring home the information to the builders and other parties concerned, the provisions of the clauses referred to have been recommended; and if Parliament should think fit to adopt them, I hope to be enabled to explain and make familiar to the public the bearings of the various cases, and thus practically to develop the meaning and application of the law, and render it less and less necessary to refer matters to the official referees.

I may take this opportunity of observing, that by an arrangement I have made in the office, it is the duty of the surveyor to give every assistance to the public in preparing their requisitions and applications, and I am in hopes that when this part of the arrangement is put on a proper footing, much of the difficulty which the public have experienced will be obviated.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

Arthur Symonds,
Registrar of Metropolitan Buildings.

* This has been distinctly stated in The Builder more than once.—Ed.

16th June, 1847.

Sir,—I am desired to thank you for your polite communication in acknowledging the report of the Builders' Society Committee upon the proposed bill for amending the Buildings Act, and to say, that it will be acceptable to the society if you will be so kind as to point out what those views are "which are founded upon misapprehensions, which might have been obviated by previous communication with your office."

The society desire me to forward to you a copy of the bill, interleaved with the alterations suggested by them to Lord Morpeth, in order that you may distinctly understand what it is that they have proposed.

In consequence of your note, it was stated to Lord Morpeth, that the suggestion of increased publicity to the awards and facility of reference had already been anticipated, and that, therefore, the remarks made in that respect might be considered to have been met. May I be allowed to inquire whether it would be acceptable to you, that your letter of the 4th June should be made public beyond the limit of the Builders' Society, in order that it may be generally known how complete your arrangements are for the public becoming acquainted with the awards and decisions of your court.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

Thos. Piper, Jun., Hon. Sec.

17th June, 1847.

Sir,—With respect to the report by the committee of the Builders' Society upon the bill now before the House of Commons, I beg, on the part of the official referees and myself, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th instant relative thereto, and to inform you, that the official referees feel, that it would not be possible for them to encounter the loss of time and labour of detailing in writing such explanations as a compliance with your request would involve, although they think that explanations might have been afforded at an interview with the committee before they had framed their report. There does not appear to be any objection to the publication of my letter, or the substance of it; but, on the contrary, it is desirable that the committee of your society should adopt any means which they think proper, to inform builders and the public of the arrangements which have been made at this office for facilitating the transaction of the business.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

Arthur Symonds,
Registrar of Metropolitan Buildings.

INFORMATION UNDER THE BUILDINGS ACT.

MAGISTRATES AND THE REFEREES.

It will be remembered that reports have appeared at different periods in The Builder, respecting an information promoted by Mr. Boulanger, against Mr. Sugden, a builder, for erecting houses near to a dangerous manufactory. The proceedings in that case are still pending. Subsequently another information has been laid by Mr. Hesketh, the district surveyor, against the same premises, under another clause of the Act, for the illegal width of the street or alley, and an award was received from the official referees, declaring that the aforesaid buildings had been erected contrary to law. The award was followed by the usual certificate, and under its authority Mr. Hesketh applied to the sitting magistrate at Southwark police office (Mr. Secker), to give effect to the certificate of the official referees.

Mr. Petersdorff, the barrister, appeared on behalf of Mr. Sugden; Mr. Hesketh's case was unsupported by counsel.

Mr. Hesketh stated his case, and produced the original award, as made by the referees. Mr. Petersdorff took an objection to its reception, and contended that the Act only required that a copy of the award should be produced as *prima facie* evidence. This led to a long discussion, when Mr. Secker determined that it was good evidence, as it was absurd to suppose that a copy could be received and an original document rejected. Mr. Hesketh was then cross-examined by Mr. Petersdorff, in which he denied most positively that during the progress of the building he was ever informed that Mr. Boulanger had a fourteen years' lease of his premises. Several witnesses were then examined to show that the line of street or alley was laid out before the Buildings Act came into operation, and that houses were commenced at each end. When the street was

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